

BRIEFING REPORT

2020/22 SmartSound Connect

**Project Summary:**

Plymouth is the home to Smart Sound Plymouth (SSP), which is a trials and proving area for advanced marine and maritime technologies and autonomy.

PCC have bid for capital grant funding of £1.8M to allow it, and its SSP partners of Plymouth Marine Laboratory, Marine Biological Association, University of Plymouth, and University of Exeter, to install high-speed mobile data network connectivity over Plymouth Sound and coastal waters up to 12 miles offshore. This essential connectivity will be freely available under license to any qualifying business or organisation engaged in Research & Development and prototype testing. It will enable SSP to become the UK's Centre of Excellence for advanced marine prototyping, testing and certification. This testing facility will support the Council's Resurgam COVID recovery programme providing up to 100 high-value jobs and developing local technical skills for tomorrow. This programme will provide growth and sustainability of the marine and maritime sectors. Any capital grant with no cash investment match required by the Council will be a good deal for Plymouth and the local economy.

We are requesting that the Service Director for Economic Development be authorised to take any necessary decisions and carry out any functions related to this project which has further stages that may need timely decisions.

Alternative options considered and rejected: No other alternative has been considered.

Financial implications: None we are seeking pure capital grant. No cash match from PCC.

Recommendation:

1. To accept any capital grant funding for the Council's SmartSound Connect project. The project will provide digital connectivity over Plymouth Sound and coastal waters
2. To authorise the Service Director for Economic Development to take any necessary decision related to the capital grant funding and award contracts for this project subject to a final business case being approved by CCIB and the funding being added to the capital programme.